701 Formerly, when war broke out and he was summoned to [117]
554 Ouagadougou, the Tansoba [sic] assembled the principal ministers
645 of the Mogho Naba at the home of his host, and his word was final.

Aside from this special case, he might call upon a minister, but then a servitor always brought along the cushion on which he would sit until the minister receives him in his private quarters. He was never received in public.

Once inside, the Tansoba occupied the best seat, and the minister got down on the floor and performed the Mossi salute.

In sum, the Tansoba was held in higher esteem than any other personage at the king's court.

645 (b) At the present time. Today ministers often visit each other.
574 Since they have rapid means of transportation at their disposal, they regularly go about without escorts. Most often their visits are made in order to deal with matters of general interest.

When a minister calls upon another minister, he keeps his cap
645 on and neither removes his shoes nor performs the kantissé. They
576 are equals. This equality has been established by the local admin-
574 istration which has granted the same rights and salary to all. The minister shakes hands with his colleague and takes a seat. He is served copious quantities of beer, and then he takes his leave.

642 In spite of assertions to the contrary, the Mossi empire is politically disorganized. This accounts for the errors committed by the local administration and the [118] mistakes held against the ministers of the Mogho Naba who for a long time were granted too much power.

The Origin of Mossi Chiefdom (Legend), or the Way the Peulh, the Yarcé, and the Blacksmiths Salute Mossi Chiefs

773 The Peulh, the Yarcé, and, to a certain extent, the black-
184 smiths do not perform the kantissé (Mossi salute). They have a different way of saluting naba. A curious legend explains this phe-
576 nomenon. However bizarre it may seem, it is not lacking in interest, and we shall tell it just as it was handed down to us.

428 2. Not to be disqualified for the following causes.

a. Murder of the deceased.

b. Failure to avenge his death. In the old days the son had to avenge his father's death before inheriting his property. At present the term "vengeance" should be understood to mean that he must seek satisfaction for the crime in the courts.

c. Failure to celebrate the funeral.

If the legitimate heir is a minor, his guardian must carry out the ceremony in the child's name.

d. Existence of a will whereby the deceased disinherits the heir presumptive.

Order of succession. As a general rule, property is handed down in the direct line, that is, to the eldest son of the deceased. It is handed down in a collateral line only if there is no son. In the case of certain items, however, for example, the family fetish, the heir is the eldest brother of the deceased.

If there is no heir of the first or second degree, the estate goes to the closest relative of the person from whom the deceased inherited the property.

428 431 The eldest in the family excludes the others and has sole possession of the property. Custom demands, however, that he hand over to his brothers and uncles a part [258] of the property. Nevertheless, this is a free gift which he is not actually forced to make.

428 562 184 In the case of the estate of a naba, the eldest son alone usually inherits all the property left by the deceased because of the heavy expenses he must meet to follow custom when he becomes a candidate for the chiefdom. As far as the women are concerned -- they are a part of the property -- he selects the ones he likes, and the rest are left for the nabissi (sons and descendants of naba).

The same is not true for ordinary Mossi, who have begun to realize that there are advantages in allowing all of the children of the deceased to share in the estate. In the chapter dealing with "Marriage" we have already seen that women were allowed some choice of a husband among the sons of the deceased.

428 In any case, however, the eldest son retains the largest share of the estate, and this is easily understandable in view of the

428 to change his mind. If, however, he absolutely refuses to heed their protests, they will not make an issue of it, but when the time comes to [262] apportion the estate, the testamentary arrangement to disinherit the heir presumptive will simply be declared null and void.

If the heir presumptive was disinherited for any of the causes for disqualification listed above or because he had committed adultery with one of his father's wives or a wife of someone in the family, the estate is given to the next in the line of succession as determined by Moaga custom.

Right to make a will. All who own property may make wills.

Revocation of wills. Wills may be revoked if the testator so desires. He has only to make a simple oral declaration of changed intention in the same manner as that described above.

Chapter 18

Circumcision. Do the Mossi Practice It?

304 Circumcision is highly esteemed among the Mossi. Some
● 184 colonial officials, because of their ignorance of Mossi customs, have claimed that neither circumcision nor excision was practiced. One must be able, indeed, to distinguish between the Moaga, the Boussanga, and especially the Nionioga. Although the three groups are related, they have different customs.

304 Circumcision, which is done according to precise rules, is carried out here in virtually the same way as it is among the Kassonké of Kayes.

304 The ceremony must originally have been imposed on the Dagomba (of whom the Mossi are descendants) by Islam. Now,
626 however, young men seek to have themselves circumcised, not for any religious reason, but rather to avoid the ridicule of their friends and, especially, the scorn shown by Mossi women for any uncircumcised man.

304 We shall attempt to describe below the circumcision ceremony among the Mossi.

After the harvest, toward the end of November, the young men state their wish to be circimcised. Since the cost of supporting

314 The Nioniossé and the Soukoaba do not practice circumcision,
184 and that is why they are called Mossé. In villages inhabited solely by Nioniossé, a kéogo may not be set up. At present some boys of Nionioga origin ignore the prohibition and go to their mother's village (Yastenga) to have the purifying operation (1).

[775]

1. Apparently the Moslems believe that those who are circumcised will not go to hell.

304 Among the Mossi many Christians voluntarily have themselves
832 circumcised; women -- even Christians -- feel a certain repug-
626 nance for the touch of the "Moaga."

Finally, excision is also esteemed among the Mossi, except among the Nioniossé who do not practice it. Girls who are not excised are scorned by their friends and will have no lovers.

585 184 It should be noted that these ceremonies are often curtailed. They may also vary in ways that will not be described here. Sometimes they may not take place at all. This happens when the girl already has a husband prior to her birth, or when she is part of an inheritance. In such cases her relatives merely take her to her husband.

585 782 No sacrifices are performed during the marriage ceremonies. The husband does offer a sacrifice on the day he builds a hut for his wife, and at the place where the structure is to be erected. The girl's mother consults the sorcerer a few times to find out if her daughter will be welcomed in her new home, and to know which sacrifice must be offered to ward off illness while she lives with her husband. She communicates the answer to the girl's father, and he himself offers the prescribed sacrifice.

602 431 In theory, the husband owes nothing else to his in-laws. In practice, he would hold himself in poor esteem if he were not to present them with a few more gifts, especially on important feast days. When his maize is harvested, he sets aside a few ears for his wife's relatives; when his millet is threshed, he is sure to send some to his father-in-law; whenever he organizes any sort of festivity, his in-laws are invited; and he personally helps them in their work.

586 There is no divorce in the formal sense of a judgment rendered by law. A husband may send his wife back to her relatives if she steals, if she is lazy, or especially if she commits adultery, but even in the latter case his action will be regarded with disapproval. It is a husband's duty to watch over his wife and, if necessary, to discipline her. The man who repudiates his wife makes himself unpopular and cannot obtain new wives. It also happens, and this occurs more frequently, that the wife runs away and goes back to her family, /33/ either because she complains of ill treatment, or because she is not happy with her husband, or for some other reason of a more or less dubious character. If the husband manages to catch up with her before she gets home, no great problem is involved. He merely beats her and shuts her in for a few days. If she does reach her relatives, especially if they are in connivance, the husband must present a few gifts to them and even to his wife. The in-laws usually try to convince their daughter to return to her husband, but they do not force her to do so. Even the naba, when called upon to intervene, limits himself to the use of moral authority; his threats usually persuade the woman to return to her husband, who may himself use force if he wishes.

304 Children are tattooed at any age, sometimes when already grown. Many Yarsé do not tattoo their children, and the Mossi themselves do not seem especially to hold to this barbarous custom which sometimes disfigures an individual. The tattooing is done with a razor, and powdered charcoal is put into the wounds. In order to soften the skin and to alleviate the pain, the whole face is covered with oil until the wounds are healed, leaving more or less accentuated scars depending on the success of the operation. Some natives are completely disfigured by thick excrescences of flesh as the result of a faulty operation.

Sorcerers sometimes have the strange idea of prescribing tattoo marks on the belly or lower back of children whose older siblings have [789] died. For instance, a woman had lost three of her children. She consulted a sorcerer when the fourth was born, and he declared with the greatest seriousness that the child would die if his buttocks were not marked with stripes and his belly with tattooings radiating from the navel. The child was marked accordingly, and he lived! Young girls nearly always tattoo their belly with lines extending radially from the navel; many adorn their chest above the bosom with small stripes running perpendicular to the breasts and parallel between them. The tattooing patterns we have described here are, of course, only the most widespread types, because there is a great variety of markings.

304 852 Just as there is no set age for tattooing, there is none for circumcision. Children of seven or eight are circumcised along with youths and even mature men. Circumcision does not seem to be a Mossi [184] custom, for it is not a general practice. In Ouagadougou province most children are circumcised, while in Koupéla province most of them are not. However, the custom is gaining yearly in Koupéla. The head of the family often has himself circumcised because he is ill, and his children follow suit. Thus circumcision is introduced into the family, for once the father has undergone the operation, his children do likewise. Sometimes the mother is a Yarga, thus from a 304 563 Moslem family, and her children are circumcised, a new gain for the 852 practice. It also happens that children are drawn to it through sheer curiosity and the enticing assurances of the Peul and Yarsé, who are usually Moslems and thus circumcised, and who spread propaganda all around them. Excision, on the other hand, is universal.

/42/ When there is a group to be circumcised, their relatives set a date with the Peul who is to perform the operation. At dawn of that

764 meters in diameter and 0.70 meter in depth. At the bottom of this first hole or against the wall, a second pit is dug, 0.75 meter in diameter. The bottom of the second hole is enlarged to form a sort of chamber, 1.50 to 2 meters in length and 0.75 meter in depth, where the body will be laid. This chamber is plastered with a preparation of néré to make the inner surface very smooth.

Young men spend the whole night at this task. Meanwhile, friends and absent relatives hasten to the house of the deceased as soon as they hear of his death; drummers also come, on the lookout for a few jars of beer and a few cowries. Everyone dances, sings, and makes merry.

764 765 The children and younger brothers of the deceased wear mourning clothes: an ample apron with a large pocket, adorned with cloth streamers and various designs on a red or blue background; a small gourd as head covering; a circle of ashes on the face, and a cross of ashes on the back. The daughters and sisters of the deceased wear in addition a bunch of leaves in the back and thin white cotton cords around the neck. The eldest son wears a sheep skin across his chest and over the shoulder. At dawn the millet beer comes, the millet 764 mush is ready, and they are taken to the men who dug the grave. The undertaker tosses a little beer onto the soil removed from the pit and mixes it with some millet mush. Then the merry-making comes to a halt, and everyone drinks, eats, and rests for a while. Sometimes the dancing is taken up again around noon. When the sun dips toward the horizon, the burial gets underway.

An opening is made in the hut where the dead man lays, and the corpse is removed through it. The body is laid in front of the hole, and every one of the dead man's children must pass through and step over his father's corpse. The body is then laid on a stretcher, but not tied as yet; it is taken back into the courtyard, through the opening left by the séko which was removed at the moment of death. The eldest son now draws near with a goat or chicken, according to his means, and gives it to the undertaker who offers it to the deceased by shoving it forward three times and saying: "Your son offers you this goat, so it will bear kids for you." The other children may also present offerings, as well as the friends, /70/ and the undertaker offers them all to the deceased in the same manner. In some localities, the animals thus presented are taken home by the undertaker, who kills [184] and eats them, and no sacrifice is made on the spot; elsewhere the victims are killed near the corpse.

764 be worn, others for carrying jars or to take to market. A woman is also offered a gourd to cook sauce, along with pepper, spices of all sorts, and salt. In addition, she is given the spindle that she used to spin cotton, but first its stem is broken; in fact, everything which is offered to the dead is previously damaged or torn. Wealthy friends also present clothes, and the others toss cowries to the dead. The undertakers carefully cover the smaller hole with blankets to prevent the cowries /71/ from falling into the pit. Every once in a while they allow a few to slide down, but they keep the greater part to themselves. When everyone has tossed in his offering, the undertakers take one, two, or several pieces of clothing; this is their share, and the practice is sanctioned by custom. They also take a few handfuls of cowries from the mourning apron, and someone hastens to count them. All eyes are anxiously focussed on the person who counts them, [80] 787 for either a man or a woman will die soon, depending on whether the number of cowries comes nearer to 333 or to 444.

Finally the undertakers close up the pit. If the deceased was an old woman, the smaller opening is plugged with one of the large jars in which she prepared millet beer; if a man, it is covered with a small jar or sometimes, especially if the opening is larger, with sticks laid as close together as possible. The corpse is thus completely isolated in its funeral chamber. The larger hole is then filled up with the soil removed from the pit. A jar and an earthen sauce pot are placed on top in the case of a woman, an earthen pot and a large stone in the case of a man.

Everyone withdraws to drink, eat, and rest. There is no dancing that night, but they make up for it on the following day and even on the day after that, if the wealth of the deceased permits it. On the second day after the funeral in the case of an old man, on the third day for an old woman, the children and younger brothers of the deceased shave their heads, go to thank those who have helped them, and remove their mourning clothes. There will be no further preoccupation with the deceased until the anniversary festivities or koure.

[184] Such are the ceremonies which usually attend the death and burial of a married man or woman, those who have children. We say "usually," for all these complex ceremonies may be curtailed and modified to a greater or lesser extent, depending on the region and the customs peculiar to one family or another.

769 In addition to this kourita, if the deceased was head of the household, his oldest daughter, or in her absence, his granddaughter, [184] occasionally plays a role and is also called kourita, but this custom is less widespread. Her mourning clothes are embellished with thin cords of red straw (bini) around the neck and wrists and above the elbow and at the ankles, 13 for a man and 14 for a woman. Around her head she wears cotton threads (pana) which hang down her back like a long tail, ending in a pompon. The first kourita, previously mentioned, sometimes wears these badges also. This second kourita actually has only one task, namely, to plant large millet where her father's huts stood. When the millet is ripe, she sets it aside to use for preparing millet beer on the day of the kouré. Sometimes her position is held for three years, and she cannot shave during this time. To offset this, it is she who brews the beer for the Day of the Dead (basra). At the end of three years, she shaves and takes up her usual way of life. No such kourita is provided for an old woman, since she was not the head of a household.

A mother is kourita for a child who dies before he marries. She wears at her ankle a thin cotton cord to which she adds a knot daily [801] for the duration of mourning, 33 days for a boy, 44 days for a girl.

The Moro Naba has a kourita like other Mossi, but on the day of the kouré a young boy of his family is appointed to represent him for life. This kourita adopts the name of the dead naba, and all through the dry season he goes from canton to canton, as the true Moro Naba could not do in his lifetime. Everywhere he is greeted and entertained with great honors, he receives many gifts, and his men loot what they can. One place only is closed to him, Ouagadougou, the residence of his successor. If they were to meet, one of them would die within the year. At present there are among the Mossi two kourita of Moro Nabas: that of Naba Sanem, who welcomed Binger, and that of Naba Sigri, enthroned as a result of Voulet's conquest and deceased in 1905. Naba Wobro, deposed by our troops, has no kourita because he was [643] no longer Moro Naba when he died; he had failed tradition by leaving Ouagadougou and thereby renounced his rights as a sovereign.

/74/ The first funeral is a temporary expedient; the human body decomposes quickly, and the burial has to be held before all the friends and relatives can be assembled. Also, death comes by surprise; there are not enough cowries, the animals have not been gathered in sufficient numbers, and the deceased must be granted the honors due his rank, he must be offered numerous victims. These are the reasons

5: Hammond E-5 (1954-1956) 1959
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342 592 [264] received, gossip exchanged, and social and ceremonial obligations discussed in its shade. Here also, the men of the lineage take their meals, brought out to them from the kitchens of their wives and set before them by their sons, who first attend their fathers and then dine on what remains.

592 252 [512] A few paces away is the grinding platform (*nere*) where the women gather to prepare the grain for their families' meals. This great circular mud table, some twenty feet in diameter, is raised about three feet from the ground. Its surface is beaten hard and worked over with cinders and manure to make it rainproof. Each woman has her assigned place at this platform where she keeps her pestle and where she stations herself at dawn and again at dusk to grind her millet and learn the news of the day.

592 Frequently found at the outer perimeter of the dwelling of the Mossi kin group is the house of the son of a lineage woman who has returned from his father's household to live in the benevolent presence of his mother's family, with whom he enjoys an especially permissive relationship. The house set aside for the residence of the young unmarried men of the lineage is also located on the outer edge of the compound dwelling.

555 184 A recent addition to the traditional pattern of village organization described above is the independent households of socially ambitious individuals who have chosen to separate themselves from the residences of their lineages in order to profit from their own economic or religious enterprises. Many have become independently wealthy through successful commercial ventures; others, as a result of conversion to Islam, have gained prestige through religious authority and wealth through the tuition and services provided by the Koranic students. Often these people are much younger than their lineage elders, not in line for the inheritance of political or religious authority through traditional channels, and unwilling either to accept the authority of their seniors or to share economically with the less prosperous members of their lineages. They are deviants, in conflict with the communal patterns of consumption and with the emphasis on accepting established authority which characterizes the traditional social organization of the Mossi.

THE TRADITIONAL ECONOMY

613 476 243 Much agricultural endeavor is necessarily co-operative. Each farmer is dependent on the assistance of his kinsmen to get his fields seeded, cultivated, and harvested in the short time during which each of these operations must take place. However, the yield from his field remains his own, to be shared only with his own wives and children. Members of the lineage also work in the fields under the specific control of the lineage elder. Although the harvest from these fields is stored in the granary

241 [i.e. at a sun shelter in the entrance-way. — Analyst]

244 mats in the sun to dry. Finally, the sesame seeds are beaten loose with a piece of wood.

252 The Mossi ordinarily use these seeds in the sauce. The women crush them on a stone, boil them, and add salt and soumbara /néré seeds/. This sauce is eaten with millet, /474/ maize, etc. Sometimes the fresh seeds are also eaten after roasting on the fire.

244 The Mossi also grow some beans (benna or binga in Mossi, soso in Mandé, niébé in Peuhl). They do not cultivate them in separate plots, but sow them in the millet fields along with the millet. The stalks creep along the ground. The beans are ripe before the millet.

It is the women and children, equipped with baskets, who do the harvesting (November). Then the pods are laid out on the ground and threshed by the men with sticks. The beans are picked [252] and placed in the straw huts. To eat them, one simply boils them and adds salt.

The Mossi grow some sweet potatoes (nanioua in Mossi, nanioura [084] in Nounouma). The Mossi who live around Ouagadougou do not grow any. Those who live around Kombisiguiri grow some. A few Tenkodogo Mossi also cultivate them. The potatoes are planted along the watercourses around July 15, that is to say, at the height of the rainy season. Small earth mounds are built, with holes at the top. Potato slices are placed in these holes and covered with earth. When the sowing is done, the work is over. No attempt is made to pull out the weeds. The harvesting is done at the end of three months, consequently around October 15. The potatoes are dug out [252] with the ouaka, carried to the huts, and eaten boiled in water.

The Mossi grow some ozonifie /a potato-like plant/ (pèsa in Mossi, kayya in Nounouma and Kassouna, fabirama in Mandé) around the soukala or in the bush. They build small earth mounds with the ouaka, then make holes in these mounds with the koutiaga, and place one tubercle in each hole. They cover up the holes and spread the ground with fertilizer consisting of straw and grass, refuse taken from the soukala or gathered around it. The harvesting is done in November. At that time, the ozonifie are dug out with the ouaka. They are placed in a canari pending their consumption. They are [252] eaten boiled.

2444 All Mossi grow ozonifie. They like it, but do not cultivate it in large quantities. It has to be planted in damp places. Some people plant it in the bush, others in the villages, but always near a spot where there is water.

[184] /475/ The Mossi hardly grow any yams (nioua or niouya in Mossi, pia in Nounouma, kou in Mandé). The southern Mossi alone cultivate it, and very little at that, in Kombisiguiri for example.

Here yams are sown in November along watercourses. Earth mounds 50 centimeters high and correspondingly wide are built with the ouaka. Then holes are made with a stick at the top of these little pyramids. Yam slices are cut, buried in these holes, and covered with earth. Then a prop is driven into the ground. The stem of the yam plant emerges from the ground and climbs along the prop. Seven months are required for the root, the yam itself, to reach its proper thickness and ripeness. During the month of April, therefore, a certain number of yams are dug out of the ground with the ouaka. The greatest number are left there, however, the soil is replaced, and the major harvest, the total harvest, is only taken in November, that is to say, a year after sowing.

[252] To eat yams, one cuts them into pieces and boils them in water.

[177] As for manioc (boumboro in Nounouma), it was unknown to the Mossi until the arrival of the French. The latter brought a few stalks, but the natives do not cultivate it as yet.

As far as diabéré is concerned (kousoubadé in Mossi, diabéré in Mandé), the Mossi grow a little of it. It is sown at the time of the first rains in the fields of maize or large red millet, that is to say, around the soukala. Holes are made with the koutiaga, and small tubercles are placed within them. The plant is harvested one month after maize, that is, in September.

In Mossi territory, it is cultivated chiefly by the Yarsé, for example those of Rakaye and Saraboutenga.

The Mossi themselves cultivate it little, and the same applies to the Bambara. The Gourounsi and Boussansé do not grow it at all.

[253] The diabéré is cooked in water, peeled, and eaten as it is.

According to Guebhardt (Au Gouta-Djallon /In the Fouta Djallon/, 1910), the diabéré (the Poullo /Fulani/ name) is really taro (Caladium antiquorum or esculentum).

428 593 184 Actually, those shares vary from region to region among the Mossi. Thus, in certain areas, the oldest son gets the soukala, the fields, two thirds of the livestock, cowries, and money, all the slaves and grain, as well as clothing, jewelry, weapons, horses, etc. The other sons get the remaining goods. The daughters get nothing. As for the wives, the oldest son takes three quarters and the other sons one quarter. In such cases, the eldest son is much more heavily favored than in the cases mentioned earlier.

At Kombisiguiri, this is even more accentuated. The oldest son may keep everything if he wishes. He may also give something to the other sons of the deceased or to the latter's brothers.

In short, at the stage /of evolution/ with which we are dealing, the transmission of property ranges from a complete and absolute law of primogeniture to an uneven sharing heavily tipped toward the eldest son.

593 736 Let us add that when the eldest son receives an estate, if his brothers are not yet of an age to be married, he keeps them at his home, in his own household (this is why, although Mossi households in principle include only a husband, his wives, children, and slaves, sometimes they also contain young unmarried brothers). In the morning they work for him, and in the afternoon they work their own little plots. The older brother provides them with food at all times, but not with clothes. They must procure their clothing with the returns from their own little plots. When they reach marriageable age, the older brother buys them a wife and helps them settle on their own.

429 593 When the head of a soukala dies leaving only small sons, his younger brother takes all the property for the time being but saves it for the legitimate heirs. When the eldest son of the deceased has grown up, the brother leaves the soukala and returns to his own former one, taking only his own belongings. /552/ At that time, all the real estate and movable property devolve to the oldest son and partly to the other sons.

428 593 If the head of a soukala leaves no sons but only brothers and daughters, the inheritance is shared between his younger brother and his daughters. The younger brother takes the soukala, the fields, and the wives. He leaves his own soukala and settles in that of the deceased, where he brings all his belongings. He puts up either a

8: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1958
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Karême), celebrate the great festival of Ramadan and the lesser festivals, and aspire to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. Most of the Moslems can lead prayers, but only about one-tenth of their number can read and recite the Koran. However, today the masters (*karasambas*) of the 32 Koranic schools in the district are endeavoring to instruct the many boys and few girls in reading the Koran and understanding Moslem theology.

The Karême is observed by most adult Moslems in the community with the exception of invalids and working men. Moslems say that the fast is intended to turn the minds of the people to God, and they distinguish between the Moslems "of the mouth" who break the fast and those "of the heart" who fast until Ramadan. The crescent moon of Ramadan is greeted with guns and general rejoicing and the following morning the Moslems gather at the tomb of Ngado to give praises to God; during the rest of the day they pay homage to the chief and visit their friends. However, a change in the traditional observance of Ramadan is expected, because one of the Moslem leaders objects to the ceremony at the tomb of Ngado. He feels that some Moslems are beginning to regard the tomb of the first Moslem as an earth shrine or Tengkougre.

So far, only five of the more prominent Moslems in the district have made or are making the pilgrimage to Mecca. The first man made the voyage about seven years ago, and is now conducting a Koranic school in a neighboring district. His brother went to Mecca about two years ago and is now the senior *El Hadj* in the district. Of the two men who were on the pilgrimage when I arrived in the district, one has since died near the Red Sea and the other is still away. One other man left for Mecca and returned to the district during my stay. Most of the pilgrims now fly to Mecca; only two men followed the traditional route through Ghana, Kano, Lake Chad, the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan (now Sudan), and on to Mecca. In general, all pilgrims have used their own resources for the trip, but they receive some help from their lineage brothers and from the other Moslems in the district and in Ouagadougou.

The pilgrimage to Mecca represents the greatest event in the lives of the district Moslems. When the last pilgrim left, a great crowd gathered at his house and prayed for his safe journey, and some even accompanied him to Ouagadougou and remained there until he left. The Moslems and many pagans of the district, under the command of the district chief, cultivated his fields during his absence. And when the new El Hadj returned, a large crowd accompanied him to his house with shouts of joy. There he killed a sheep in thanksgiving, sprinkled the crowd with holy water from Mecca, and recounted his experiences. His listeners were impressed by his airplane flight and the description of Mecca, but they showed the greatest interest when he said that Mecca women covered their faces and that most Meccan men were monogamous. The local Moslems smiled when they heard this bit of news from one of their members, but I have seen them scowl when discussing the monogamous practice desired by the Christians.

The attitudes of Moslems differ very little from those of the other Mossi as regards children and polygyny. They say that they do not believe in the

8: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1958
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794 efficacy of ancestor veneration and do not "kill chickens" to the ancestors, but
595 they maintain that it is a man's duty to have many wives so that he may have
842 children to succeed him. Furthermore, since Mohammed himself decreed that his followers may keep four wives, provided they treat each with the same degree of kindness, there is no conflict between Islamic tenets and Mossi practice of polygny. The average Moslem has two wives, but even the few men in the district who have more than four wives do not appear overly concerned about
[582] transgressing the tenets of their faith. Mossi Moslems have not adopted the paternal parallel cousin marriage so common among other Moslems, and show surprise when told that Islam permits such marriages. However, they have modified their marriage behavior to harmonize with what they consider an Islamic tenet that "a man should not marry the widow of his father." The Moslem Mossi profess to look with horror on these marriages among their pagan brothers, preferring the levirate instead.

794 The Moslems' attitude toward the low status of women in Mossi society
562 has not changed, and in one respect it can even be said that this attitude has been strengthened. Many Moslem wives now cover their faces, and many El Hadjis have attempted to place their wives in purdah by preventing them from going to the market for fear they would come in contact with pagan men. The development of this practice is running counter to the growing emancipation of Mossi women, who have just begun to leave their villages for periodic visits to the larger towns. Nevertheless, the important fact is that the Mecca pilgrims have the opportunity to see Moslem women playing roles which are forbidden or unknown to Mossi women. And while it is true that the Mossi pilgrims would not easily adopt and foster monogamy, their receptivity to new Islamic beliefs and customs might have a liberating effect on their treatment of women. Once institutional and cultural changes have been accepted by the El Hadjis, they are likely to spread quite rapidly throughout the society because men who have visited Mecca are believed to have returned filled with wisdom and understanding.

797 Christianity came to the Mossi on January 24, 1900, shortly after French conquest. As noted above, the first missionaries were well treated, but the Mossi balked at the attempts at conversion. Nevertheless, by 1919 the White Fathers of the Catholic missions had established several centers, among which was the district of Manga where this study was conducted. Manga is considered a Catholic district, but there are only 3,000 Catholics out of a population of 124,000—which also includes 9,200 Moslems and five Protestants.
● [184] Thus, in contrast to Moslem Nobéré, which has no Catholics or Protestants, Manga, like most districts in Mossi territory, has a Moslem community.

The conversion of the Mossi in Manga to Catholicism follows the classical pattern of missionary proselytization in the country. Monsignor Socquet (1956:62) states that the Mossi always react to attempts at conversion with the statement: " 'We are looking at our chief,' that is to say, 'We will follow our chief in conversion as in all other matters. If he is favorable to it, then we will not go against his will.' " Socquet concludes: "It is thus understandable

the original segment of the ruling Biligo lineage had lived in Barkago for some time, it divided into two minor lineages and settled in two saghse, Natenga and Godin. A noble from Godin possessed the nam, but it eventually passed to a noble from Natenga. The new chief then founded a new saka called Kedpalago because he wanted more living space for his own children. As a result, the minor lineage of Natenga now had two babissi living in two saghse. The minor lineage of Godin subsequently declined in size and prestige. The only evidence of its former importance was that its eldest male continued to make separate sacrifices to his own chiefly ancestors, even though the more recent holders of the nam made sacrifices to all former chiefs. These independent sacrifices were made in spite of the fact that this minor lineage kept growing smaller because its male members left to live elsewhere or to join maternal patrilineages with higher status. The sacrifices were expected to cease only if and when the minor lineage were to disappear with the incorporation of the widows and orphans of its last surviving males into the other Biligo groups of the village and district. Of course, if the Godin minor lineage had regained the nam, it undoubtedly would have experienced a rebirth and renewal of strength. It might have attracted its daughter's sons, and even aliens who would have lived in its saghse as they did in those of the ruling lineage segments.

A fourth saka, Nakomgo ("we hunger after the nam"), was inhabited by the noble descendants of Naba Ngado, the district chief who had replaced the descendant of Naba Biligo of Nobere. Since these nobles traced their descent from two full brothers, Kouliga and Kongo, they formed two related minor lineages with five component minimal lineages. The compounds of the two babissi of the Kouliga minor lineage were separate but contiguous. Near them were the compounds of the three babissi of the Kongo minor lineage. Scattered about in the Nakomgo saka were compounds of sisters' sons, strangers, and nobles' slaves.

The people of Narila, the fifth saka of Barkago, were members of the aboriginal Ninisi population, and thus furnished the village's earth-priest. He made sacrifices to the earth shrines in the village, gave ritual permission for building compounds and digging graves, and took control of the village during the period between the death of a chief and the accession of another. Scattered throughout the various saghse were compounds inhabited by people of serf, slave, or refugee origin.

Of all the groups within the village, the Ngado people kept the most exact genealogies. They did so because one of the segments of their maximal lineage held the district nam, and as nobles they had theoretical access to it. Once they had lost the nam of the district, the descendants of Biligo

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mal lineage segment except the pretenders to the throne shaved their heads as a sign of mourning. The royal pretenders donned sheepskin mantles to signify that they were willing to "eat the nam." Once the ruler had been buried, the country settled down to an uneasy peace until the eighth day, when the funeral ceremonies took place. In the meantime, the Napoko symbolically held daily court, and the Tansoba's army acted as a check against the attempts of ambitious princes to seize power by force of arms.

Two days before the funeral, the Kamsaogho Naba selected the Kourita, who was to replace the Napoko as the living symbolic representative of the dead Mogho Naba. The person chosen to be Kourita was usually a young son of the deceased king, but since this person was banished from the capital, most of the royal wives hid their young children or fled the palace with them.[33] Once the Kourita had been chosen, the Kamsaogho Naba performed a ceremony (similar to those connected with the divine kings of the Near East) during which the youth was given one of his father's horses, dressed in his father's clothes, and given his father's youngest widow as a wife. He was then paid the homage due the Mogho Naba, and after receiving many gifts from the dignitaries, he was banished from Ouagadougou forever. As he went through the country, he was treated like the Mogho Naba and given many wives and presents. If he should chance to return to Ouagadougou or see the new Mogho Naba, either or both of them would be killed by the ancestors. Many Mossi districts seem to have been founded by exiled Kouritadamba. These men were undoubtedly among the numerous "elder" sons of past kings who are said to have "refused" the nam and gone to live in the districts now governed by their descendants.

The choice and banishment of the Kourita heralded the funeral rites, which were characterized by numerous animal sacrifices to the ancestors in the name of the deceased ruler. On the afternoon of the first day of the funeral, the Crown Prince mounted a horse and left the palace by the women's door. The Napoko then took the bridle of her brother's horse and led him and an immense crowd of cavalry, armed warriors, and musicians around the palace walls three times. After the third round, the Napoko demanded that her brother give her a personal servant as a present; he hesitated, but finally granted her request. The Napoko was then lifted up by the warriors, who shouted as they carried her home. The funeral thus came to an end.

All Mossi potentates tried to emulate the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou in matters of pomp, ceremony, and government.[34] Their courts were inferior to his, but only because they were less powerful and less wealthy.

Some of the more important rulers, such as the heads of the Yatenga, Fada-N'Gourma, and Tenkodogo kingdoms, were chosen by local electoral colleges, which did not have to seek the approval of the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou or notify him of the choices made. Their authority, as we have seen, was supported by claims of equality with Ouagadougou. But, with the exception of the Tenkodogo ruler, they were actually farther removed from the main line of royal descent than the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou. The autonomous Dimdamba had their own electoral colleges, which in some cases were made up of men related to the electoral-college members of the Mogho Naba of Ouagadougou. (For example, the Ouidi Naba of Boulsa was descended from the Ouidi Naba of Ouagadougou.) These local colleges were usually free to nominate and elect the Dimdamba without consulting the Mogho Naba, even though he ratified many nominations.[35] According to Cheron, "The nomination of the Dim of Boulsa did not become definitive until ratified by the Mogho Naba, who was always consulted by the electors and who could impose his own candidate."[36] This was not always true, nor did every Mogho Naba refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of autonomous provinces. Whether he did or not often depended on his strength relative to that of the Dimdamba. Once the Dimdamba had been chosen, however, they were installed with ceremonies similar to those for the Ouagadougou ruler.

Like their superiors, the Dimdamba had the authority to delegate power to the Kombemba and Tense Nanamse. Some of them also had the right to grant the nam to a fellow Dim. The Boussouma Naba, for instance, could grant it to the Mane Naba.[37] Mogho Nanamse granted such rights to Dimdamba for various reasons. They might do so on the basis of their relative strength vis-à-vis a particular Dim at a particular time, or because they admired him or were closely related to him. However, a Dim exercised sovereignty in his own name, regardless of whether he was subordinate to the Mogho Naba or to another Dim. In contrast, the district chiefs and the village chiefs exercised sovereignty on behalf of the Mogho Naba or of the Dim in whose territory they resided.

The installation ceremonies for the two lower orders of chiefs were not too different from those for the Mogho Nanamse and Dimdamba. For example, when the Nobere district chief died, the provincial minister for Nobere—in this case the Gounga Naba—reported his death to the Mogho Naba. The ruler then summoned one of the deceased chief's officials to the capital to report on the qualifications of all potential candidates for the nam. The provincial minister, in turn, dispatched one of his own representatives to the district to verify the reports he had received. It was only when this

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prepared sauce, and flung them in three directions to the waiting ancestral spirits. He then beseeched the royal spirits, the spirits of former provincial ministers, and the spirits of the ancient people (the Ninisi) to grant a long life to the Mogho Naba and peace to all the Mossi. He repeated the ritual with three morsels of meat and with the contents of a pot of beer. When he had finished, the Gande Naba picked up the food thrown to the ancestors and carried it away. He did not look backward for fear that he should see the ancestors and die as a result. The departure of the Gande Naba was the signal for the palace retainers to rush toward the food. They seized and ate what they could, spilling and wasting a good deal in the process.[8]

Meanwhile, chiefs and headmen held similar ceremonies in every district, village, hamlet, and compound in the Ouagadougou kingdom. District and village chiefs offered sacrifices to their ancestors in the name of their subjects. The sacrifices on the hamlet and compound level were more specific. Every grown man had to take a sheep, goat, or chicken to his elder and request that it be offered to the ancestors in his name. The elder sacrificed the animal and beseeched the ancestors to grant the petitioner good health, bountiful crops, and many children during the coming year. The women and children did not take part in the ritual, but they did participate in the general feasting that followed.

The festivities of the Tense lasted only a few days in the districts and villages, but in the capital it did not end officially until about four weeks had elapsed. At the end of this period, the Larhalle Naba gave the Mogho Naba all the cords that had been used to mark the coming of the Tense. A few days later, the chief Tengsoba of Guillingou, the native village of Oubri's mother, and the Tengsobadamba of other important ceremonial centers, visited the Mogho Naba in the palace courtyard. Here they all sacrificed white cocks and placed the blood and feathers of their victims on their ceremonial axes in order to "increase the power" of these objects. Later on, they were given cooked mutton, millet cakes, and other presents. Their departure for home later in the day marked the close of the Tense.

The religio-political function of the Tense is quite explicit, despite the statement by Dim Delobson, himself a Mossi chief (but also a convert to Catholicism), that "it is apparent that this festival has no outstanding features. Its sole aim is to make peace between the living and the dead, and, in the process, to allow everyone to enjoy the food."[9] Judging by the reports of old men who participated in the festival before it was banned, the people did have a good time and enjoyed the food. What is important, however, is that like the Basgha, the Tense served not only "to make peace

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his guests.[13] On the contrary, when the Imam visited the ruler on Fridays or during important festivals to read from the Koran, the sovereign gave him sweetened millet water and appropriate gifts.

Most Mossi rulers at all levels had Moslems among their councillors. These men were often the only persons who had traveled extensively outside the country (on pilgrimages to Mecca), and thus could counsel a ruler about how to deal with foreign visitors. Most early European visitors to Mossi country were either helped or hindered (chiefly the latter, it seems) by these travel-wise councillors. Crozat had difficulties with the Moslems long before he arrived in Mossi country proper. When he got to Lanfiera, the Mossi who lived there were alarmed, and refused to help him proceed to Ouagadougou despite his protestations that "I come for the good of all, white and black, that we may be together like brothers, since the same God has made us all." Crozat reports that his plea was in vain because "El Hadj Ali-Karl declared that he would not receive me, and he will not receive me. El Hadj is wise, El Hadj is prudent, El Hadj knows all, El Hadj does not make decisions without good foresight, and once made, he keeps them."[14]

Crozat had the same difficulty when he entered Mossi country. He tells us, "At Dounse [near Yako], for example, the marabouts did not look favorably upon my arrival, and it took a great deal of insistence on the part of Moussa to convince the Imam, my unwilling host, to present me to the chief who had expressed the desire to see me."[15] Crozat also found that he had to lodge with the Imam when he arrived at Ouagadougou, and he was assigned the same huts "which had served Captain Binger," who had visited the capital before him. He was disappointed with his reception and declares:

> I already knew from experience what sort of influence these men exercised over the chiefs. As a councillor of the chief, the Imam was overtly acknowledged as the second official in the village, but in reality he often commanded it. The Imam of Ouagadougou, therefore, could do much to help me or to hurt me. My decision to court him might flatter him, and that would be a move in the direction of winning his good graces, which, all things considered, was most important to me. The result was only partly in my favor. I succeeded insofar as the Imam was not hostile to me, but he did not help me as he might have.[16]

These Moslem councillors realized better than most other people what the visits of the Europeans implied for the independence of the country, and they tried their best to counsel the monarchs against receiving such visitors.

Beginning with Mogho Naba Doulougou (ca. 1750) Mossi sovereigns, whether Moslem or pagan, participated in the more important Moslem festi-

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vals. Being monarchs of the Mossi, they could not do otherwise. A few days before the Moslem feast of Tabaski (called *Kibsa* by the Mossi), the Mogho Naba sent the Imam of Ouagadougou cattle and sheep to be sacrificed on the holy day. On the day of the festival, the Mogho Naba and his entourage went to the mosque and joined the Imam and his flock in prayer. After the ceremony the sovereign returned to his palace and ordered that a well-washed sheep be given to the Imam for a sacrifice. This Moslem sacrifice was performed in the palace courtyard, and the Mogho Naba himself held the tail of the animal while the Imam officiated. The Mogho Naba afterward ordered his servants to provide millet water and food for his Moslem subjects. Similar ceremonies were held in all of the districts and villages where Moslems lived.

The feast at the end of the Moslem month of Ramadan was also celebrated by the Mogho Naba and most of the people within the kingdom—a fact that so surprised Binger that he wrote, "It is a most curious fact that, whether Moslem or not, all the blacks celebrate this feast."[16] The Moslems usually flattered the Mogho Naba and the other chiefs by pretending to believe that they had observed the month-long fast (which the Mossi called *no-lwere*, from *nore*, "mouth," and *lwere*, "to tie up") during Ramadan. Thus, whenever they visited the Mogho Naba or another chief during this period, they greeted him with the salutation *Ne no-lwere*, which means, "I greet you who are fasting." Similarly, the morning after the end of the fasting period, the ruler and his officials were ritually given millet water "to break their fast." The important point here is that everyone knew that the Mogho Naba's fast was a ritual fiction. Binger, who was with Boukary Naba at the end of Ramadan before this prince became Mogho Naba Wobogo, commented: "Boukary Naba is a Moslem in outward appearance only. When the prayers were about to begin, he asked me whether I was going to worship. I told him that this festival was not in accord with those of the Christians. He seemed to be delighted by the idea that the whites are not Moslems."[17]

Most Mossi chiefs celebrated the end of Ramadan in a grander manner than they did Tabaski. The members of the royal household joined the other inhabitants of the capital in their anxious vigil for the crescent moon that was to herald the start of the ceremonies. There was general rejoicing when the moon appeared, and all through the night palace guards fired shots and launched arrows into the air. The following morning, the Mogho Naba went to the mosque with his courtiers to attend prayers. Then he returned to his palace to await the Imam, who came to offer prayers of thanksgiving. The Mogho Naba gave him presents, and was visited by gift-bearing

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Moslems. In return, he gave them millet water sweetened with honey, millet cakes, meat, and kola nuts.

The celebration of the festival in the districts was not as imposing as it was at Ouagadougou, but we have Binger's excellent eyewitness account of the festivities at Sakhaboutenga:

> First of all, Boukary sent word that he would like me to accompany him to Sakhaboutenga, where it is his custom to go on the day of the festival. The chief's men spent the entire day attending to preparations: they distributed powder, cleaned guns, tried on harnesses, and polished copper fittings as we would in France on the eve of a great parade. . . . It was an occasion for revelry, and they took full advantage of it. They ate as much as they could, drank a great deal of beer, and fired many rounds of ammunition. . . . In the evening there was a moment of consternation: no one had seen the crescent; however, they consoled themselves by repeating that although it had not been sighted here, it had certainly shown itself elsewhere, and they sat down to drink beer all night long.
>
> Monday, June 11. Early this morning Boukary sent a horseman to Sakhaboutenga to consult the marabouts. The messenger soon returned and assured the chief that the moon will be seen tonight. "All the marabouts have said so." The much-desired crescent appeared for a few moments this evening; shots were fired through half the night, and beer ran in floods. . . .
>
> Tuesday, June 12. From four o'clock in the morning, the tam-tams sounded everywhere, and everyone was busy; it is obvious that this is the eve of an important event. . . . Half an hour after our departure we arrived at Sakhaboutenga. We dismounted and camped under the trees at the entrance of the village. Some Moslems from the neighborhood came, greeted Boukary, and offered him some kola nuts in lots varying from five to eight. But they always held them out in a fold of their robe [it being forbidden for a commoner to hand a gift directly to a chief]. A village nearby sent twelve large jars of beer.
>
> From afar and from all directions, long files of Moslems emerged from the village on their way to the Imam's for prayers. Several onlookers arrived on donkeys from the surrounding countryside. The religious ceremony took place on a flat expanse to the east of the village. It was an impressive spectacle. The crowd was silent. The faithful, ranged in ranks about 20 feet deep, prostrated themselves and rose again in perfect harmony and with awesome slowness. From time to time the voice of the Imam was raised, and his *amina* [amen] was heard with deep reverence.
>
> There were about three thousand persons of both sexes there, almost all of them dressed in white. The *bournous* [robes], the red tarbooshes, and the multitude of black faces lent to the ceremony the grandiose character of an oriental fete. As soon as the prayers were over, Boukary Naba walked up to the Imam of Sakhaboutenga to the sound of tam-tams to receive his blessing and the good wishes of the Moslems, who wished on my illustrious host many horses and warriors. Boukary Naba ordered that the Imam be given a magnificent sheep and several sheepskins full of cowries. He presents this

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gift every year to the Imam and to Karamakho Isa, for whom he has great veneration. These are old and wise men who cannot but give him excellent counsel.[18]

The relations between Boukary Koutou and the Moslems of the Sakhaboutenga district show how Mossi chiefs, though pagans, were able to establish viable political bonds with potentially hostile believers of another religion. Boukary Koutou was probably a Moslem "in outward appearance only," as Binger suggests. Nevertheless, it was by being Moslems of this kind that Mossi rulers managed to retain the allegiance of their Moslem subjects. This was their duty as "fathers of their people," and apparently they did it without much hesitation. In this manner, they effectively used religion to bolster their power and sustain their authority.

Ritual connections between the Mossi rulers and the chiefs of surrounding countries enabled them to protect their subjects from foreign attack and to maintain internal cohesion. The numerous reciprocal gifts between the Mossi and such other Voltaic groups as the Dagomba, Mamprusi, and Gurmanche were based on the belief in descent from a common ancestor or ancestress. Ritual and the supernatural thus played an extremely important role in the cohesiveness of the Mossi kingdoms and in the functioning of their governmental processes. Without these ritual factors, it is doubtful whether the Mossi rulers would have been able to maintain such a relatively high degree of control over their subjects, given the relative weakness of their economic resources, communications, and armed forces. In trying to understand why the Mossi retained their autonomy for so long, one must take into consideration the statement made by a French officer a year after the Mossi were conquered: "We must not lose sight of the fact that [the Mossi] have always presented a common front to strangers, and that a single word of command is sufficient to unite them against the invader in the name of kinship and national unity."[19]

The phase of Mossi political history that began when Nyennega left Dagomba and moved northward came to an end with the European conquest. Most French scholars believe that the Mossi were in a state of decadence at the time of conquest and might have fallen to such African conquerors as El Hadj Omar, Samory Touré, or Baba To. The fact remains, however, that these conquerors all skirted Mossi country without entering it. If these African rulers believed that the Mossi were invincible in their unity, it was because the Mossi, through mythical bonds of common descent and actual bonds of kinship, had welded themselves into a cohesive and powerful group.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

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1. Dim Delobson, pp. 153ff.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 251–54.
3. Cheron, "Contribution," p. 674.
4. Crozat, p. 4849.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Skinner, "Trade and Markets," pp. 237–78.
7. Barth, III, 644–49.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 202–4.
9. Dubois, pp. 282–92, 300.
10. Great Britain, Parliamentary papers: Cd. 788–27, No. 357, Acc. Papers, Vol. LXIV (1902).
11. Marc, p. 178.
12. Binger, I, 467.
13. Crozat, p. 4849.
14. Binger, I, 465.
15. Mangin, p. 23.
16. Dim Delobson, pp. 85–86.
17. Ruelle, p. 679.
18. Bovill, p. 244.
19. Gautier, p. 139; cf. Mangin, p. 112.
20. Cf. Sa'di, p. 168.

[422]
21. The chief of the Kamboinse was the only Mossi "chief" to possess a stool, which [174] is indicative of an Akan origin. The Akan origin of this group is further supported by Koelle's evidence: a Mossi informant told him that the Mossi called the Ashanti "Kamboinse" (Koelle, p. 6).

22. Skinner, "The Mossi 'Pogsioure,'" pp. 20–22.
23. Cf. Ouédraogo and Prost, pp. 16–18.
24. Dim Delobson, p. 25.
25. Binger, I, 470.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 502–4.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 504–5.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 456.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 502.

CHAPTER EIGHT

1. Cf. Dim Delobson, p. 156. He speculates that the Mogho Naba himself sacrificed the animals in the presence of his senior wife and courtiers.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 157.

[184]
3. Tauxier (*Le Noir du Yatenga*, p. 379) reports that a comparable ceremony [177] among the Yatenga Mossi was called the "Bega," and that in reality it was a Fulse ceremony "adopted by the Mossi." According to him, both the Fulse and the Mossi held this festival in order to obtain good harvests the following year, and made sacrifices to "the ancestors, to the Earth, and to God."

4. Tauxier, *Le Noir du Soudan*, p. 588.

[114]
5. Dim Delobson's description (pp. 148 ff) of the Tense differs somewhat from that given to me by my respondents. According to his version, the Tansoba played the role I have ascribed to the Larhalle Naba. Furthermore, he states that the Tense was held on Friday, an impossible fact since Saturday is the Mossi "day of the dead." In any case, all of my respondents insisted that Saturday, and not Friday, was the day on which the Tense was held. It is possible that Dim Delobson mistook the eve of the festival for its beginning, in which case his error is understandable. In most other respects our descriptions are not too different.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 152.
7. There is a widespread tradition in Mossi country that the Tenkodogo Naba made and still makes similar sacrifices at Kouroungoutenga and Sansabloga, two important earth shrines. There is a controversy about whether human sacrifices were ever offered [797] there. The missionaries in the region claim they were. The Mossi deny this and accuse the missionaries of slander.

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443 shoulder; but when he arrives in the market, he calmly places his
651 weapon on top of one of the sheds before he makes his rounds. The
626 women do not carry any weapons to market except their "words" but
411 even these are not often used because of the desire to avoid hostility—
[578] which the Mossi do not like to have disrupt one of their major institutions.

443 The rural market is the center of Mossi social life, and friends
671 as well as enemies meet within its confines. What Mangin wrote some forty years ago is still true: "Every self-respecting Mossi—man or woman, child or elder—must go to market at least once in a while, were it only to look . . . and to be looked at, if he can put on some [293] handsome clothes" (Mangin 1921 : 53). Except for the Moslems who [184] are now experimenting with a form of Purdah, there are few persons who do not go to market. The absence of someone from the market for more than two consecutive occasions is a sure sign of illness, travel, or family crisis. As one man said to me, "I must go to market, and when I get there I look for three persons: my girl friend, my debtor and my enemy. If I do now know whether any of them are at the market I am ill at ease. And when I go to the market and do not see them all, the market is not good."

443 The lively character of the Mossi market will be discussed later,
671 but throughout this kaleidoscope of activities certain consistencies
576 can be discerned. For example, one notices many different kinds of greetings and salutations in the market place, but each one of them correctly indicates the exact relation or relationship between the persons involved. Young girls on passing each other on one of their innumerable circuits of the market bend their knees slightly and place both of their cupped hands on their own breasts. Only then will they stop and exchange news. At the end of the conversation they repeat the same greeting and continue their rounds. Both girls and women greet casual male acquaintances in the same way, but [562] invariably kneel if the male stops and talks to them. Women some- [602] time kneel when speaking to each other, but always do so when addressing any male relative of a respected category, who may then send them on errands such as buying tobacco from the vendors. A man who meets a female benefactor, such as a woman who has given medi- [562] cine to one of his children, invariably kneels down before her. She may do the same thing out of respect for his male status. However, [602] [604] when a man meets either his mother-in-law or his father's sister, he is the one to kneel down in order to greet her. Two men who are equals normally shake hands, but if not, the junior in status or in age kneels down before his elder or superior. Sometimes a high status man will prevent his greeter from kneeling by raising him. When